

# Christianity and

# Crisis

A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion

VOL. VII, No. 22

DECEMBER 22, 1947

\$2.00 per year; 10 cents per copy

## Christmas

URSULA M. NIEBUHR

AND the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
Born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory given,  
Word of the Father,  
Now in flesh appearing.

All down the centuries the scene at Bethlehem has shone, shedding its light in song and picture, and reminding men that Light shineth in darkness. The fact that the Babe lying in a manger appeals not only to men of faith but to all men further declares that darkness does not overcome the light. "A little child shall lead us," we cry, and unwittingly acknowledge the economy of God.

But in very eagerness, so often we betray the vision. We wreath our picture of it in tinsel and in holly, and covering it with the latest thing in cellophane wrapping paper, we obscure the Glory which came down from Heaven. Then, forgetting whence came the gift, we lay it beside the Christmas tree and tell the children, "Santa Claus must have brought it."

But the Glory which was the mode of the Word becoming flesh cannot be denied, and glimpses thereof are always bursting through. Songs of faith and carols of joy touch our hearts, and our emotions also, especially if the music be appropriate and well sung. The more expressive and attractive the church, the greater the appeal to our imagination. Well-trained choirs, tastefully garbed, will sing for us, and if also there be the pleasant smell of fir trees and candles, we can transport ourselves in poetic reverie to the stable at Bethlehem, where, oddly enough, fir trees would be strangely out of place. If we go to a Christmas Eve Service, probably we will escape having to listen to a sermon. Perhaps it is just as well, for Christmas sermons are notoriously difficult. When God speaks by His Word, it is so hard for men, even expert preachers, to utter words to describe the Word, and its meaning. Carols are safer, and also

say the things we understand as well as those we do not. Christmas Eve Carol Services are beautiful, and even though it may be a rush to fit them in with last minute jobs such as decorating the Christmas tree, or delivering presents or stuffing the turkey, it saves time to go to church the day before, and leaves Christmas Day so much more free.

So much more free—for what? To ponder the Glory that was revealed? No, to be jolly and affectionate, and to have a good time, and, as most of us are not *very* selfish, to give others a good time. For after all, Christmas is the feast of the family and of the children. Our consciences are troubled, especially when we are not too busy, by the fact of so much want and suffering in the world; so honestly, yet also half-ashamedly, we try to give that extra check, that extra food package, as symbol of our concern for the family of God. Yet also we know, set against the Bounty of God revealed at Christmas, our calculated gifts ask the questions of us, "What thank have ye?" But our friends and ourselves exhort us not to be morbid, for Christmas is the feast of joy and cheer.

So the day of all the year dawns. Some may slip off to church in the early morning; many others combine comfort with the atmosphere of godliness by turning on the radio, and have, without effort, carols to provide a sympathetic atmosphere and background for the ritual of opening Christmas presents, or for the leisurely participation in breakfast. Breakfast will be particularly pleasant; lots of coffee, fruit, perhaps even butter (but what a price it is), and eggs, and certainly bread. As we restrain ourselves from eating too much bread, again there is the worrying reminder of the hunger of men, and of the cry of the world outside this continent, "Whence are we to buy bread that we may eat?" But it is Christmas, and "God rest you merry, gentlemen; let nothing you dismay," the radio carollers counsel us; so thoughtfully refusing that second slice of toast, we move toward an armchair by the fire, and opening a gift box of Christmas candy, we concentrate on finding our favorite kind, and then

turn to watch our children enjoying their presents by the Christmas tree.

But the vision remains: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us"; the words haunt our enjoyment of the day. God, whose Word, whose purpose was from all eternity, "now in these last days has spoken unto us by His Son," what does that mean? The world of the historic present, the here and now, our contemporary moment somehow is pierced through by the event of Christmas, but we are not quite sure how. Our natural joy and wonder over the New Birth, of which every new birth is a sign and a memory, is that the proper response to the uttered and expressed Word of God? The sense of fulfillment when we gaze at the Holy Family and acknowledge the most intimate as well as universal of all forms of human togetherness, the family, does this entitle us to belong to the company of those who beheld His Glory?

Surely God speaks to us through His creation, through the natural as well as historic facts of birth and family. But faith, the faith of the Bible, always relates both nature and history as sacraments to the Spirit, the Word of God, which animates and moves them. "For of itself the Flesh profiteth nothing; it is the Spirit which giveth life"; that is, meaning. Thus the eternal gives meaning to the historical; the infinite which gives meaning to time, God who gives meaning to man. So sentimental enjoyment, or nostalgic emotion over the vision of the Holy Family with its background of angels, shepherds and animals, must not be the content of our "Christmas feeling," for in itself such sentiment means that we, His own, have not received the Word. Sentiment, however natural and spontaneous, or however artistically expressed, for the Christian must not threaten or take the place of the honest and humble effort of heart and will to understand God's purpose, God's word, in the interrelation of God and Man, eternity and history.

If Christmas be regarded purely as a "Feast" of family joy, or a festival of the virtues of "Gemütlichkeit" and bonhomie, then we do not understand ourselves, our nature and our needs, or our history. If we accept the Word, as the revelation and gift of God, then we accept the Word becoming Flesh as Bread of Life, as the final and only explanation of life which feeds our thought and action, and without which we "perish." If we murmur, as did the Jews and Galileans in the Fourth Gospel, and do not see how the becoming Flesh of the Word feeds our longing, we miss the significance not only of the Birth, but also of the Life and Words, Death and Resurrection.

This is the "hard saying" embedded in the Word God spoke at Christmas; that the visible and concrete world of History, of the Time Being, of the "Flesh," has no significance, and in the words of John, "perisheth," if accepted for itself, or if thought of as existing in or for itself. Thus, "my Kingdom is not of this world," and "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and "flesh profiteth nothing." But if History, the "Flesh" is shot through by the meaning of God, by His Spirit, His Word, then the events of the Time Being become significant in the light of that Word. And earthly love, human family relationships become sacraments, but not substitutes or alternatives for the Love of God which was from the beginning, and which underlies and yet challenges every historical expression of love. Then perhaps the gifts of Christmastide to those who love us, as well as the crumbs we send to those beyond the circle of those who love us, may become humbling reminders of "the only True Bread which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth Life to the World, yea, the living Bread given for the Life of the World." Then, and only then, the Christmas story can become the occasion of our faith and worship, of our joy and gratitude.

Christmas is a parable as well as Sacrament of Heaven and Earth, Eternity and History. We are set halfway between the apparent satisfaction of human joys and the material pleasures of Christmastide; the feasting, the jollity and the good cheer; and the realization that every kind of natural historical satisfaction is illusory, is "vain," and "perisheth." But when we realize this, then there is room at the Inn for the Word to become Flesh and to dwell with us. Then, and only then are we bold to say,

Oh, come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

### **Austria: Bishops Call Protestants 'Brethren'**

Church bells pealed as Roman Catholic parishes throughout Austria held special days of prayer and penance during which congregations joined in petitions for peace and freedom in their country.

Appeals for special intercessory prayers were made in a joint pastoral issued by the Catholic hierarchy and read in all churches. The pastoral also appealed to "our Protestant brethren" to join in prayer for the welfare of Austria. The pastoral was said to be the first in which the Catholic bishops used the term "brethren" in reference to Protestants.

Commenting on the bishops' appeal to Protestants, Bishop Gerhard May, leader of the Evangelical Church in Austria, declared that "the Catholic and Protestant Churches have never been on better terms than at present." (RNS)

# God With Us

NOT a little of the beauty of the Nativity story as told in St. Luke lies in its contrasts. The dark streets of the "little town of Bethlehem" are set over against the flood of light which, as the curtain is lifted, streams from the heavenly mansions. The crowded inn on earth and the sky crowded with its celestial visitants; the humble shepherds and the glorious band of angels, messengers of God; the shuddering fear of those poor men as the sky opens and their joy as they hear the message which drives out all fear—one after another the contrasts move on to the climax. There in the manger lies the little baby destined to the simple life of the carpenter's home; yet destined likewise to the cross-shaped throne and the sceptre of world rule. Heaven and earth, the present and the future have met in him.

It is all spontaneous poetry, putting into pictures the two worlds in which men live and telling them that the two worlds are one. Theology has tried to make the same truth plain, but even its reasoned definitions are only glimpses of the truth they would convey. It is pictures, poetry, imagination which bring it home to the hearts of men.

But discussion of the relation of reason and imagination is beyond the scope of these modest reflections upon the lovely story which St. Luke tells. The point of the story is (to repeat) that at Christmas-time the two worlds in which man lives, and which at times seem so far apart, are revealed as one world. The little child unites them, we say. But we mean by such a phrase that we have here in him the disclosure of an ever-present universal fact. In the ultimate reality of God these two worlds are one world. Jesus belongs yonder with the band of angels as truly as he does here with Mary and Joseph in the dismal Bethlehem stable, and on the other hand the angels and the blaze of heavenly light belong as truly in the dismal stable as they do off yonder in the opened sky. God is here as surely as there, and there as surely as here.

In the story the proclamation of the angels turned the fear of the shepherds into exuberant joy. Their fear was that which men have always felt when the heavens have opened. Aghast, they have dreaded the presence of the very gods to whom they have prayed. But the angel spoke: "Fear not." It is true, he seems to say, that God does visit men in judgment. In the poetry of the Psalms: His lightnings flash; there goes a fire before Him; the earth trembles; the mountains shake. Above men, beyond men in His

awful power He does come. But fear not! this same God who rides upon the storm comes in love. He gives Himself into the humblest of human lives. The witness of His love lies there in Bethlehem in a manger, a little child born in poverty and weakness, but born in the majesty of divine love to win and rule the world.

It needs only the plainest prose to emphasize that we need that message today. The evidence of God's devastating judgment upon the self-seeking of men, their greed and lust for power, stares us in the face. It is hard in the misery and suffering of the world to see the hand of His love and win the assurance that His justice is directed in love; but it is supremely important that we should win that assurance, that we should look out upon the devastated world with eyes which see God's love working here and there and everywhere. It is supremely important for today the whole world lives in fear. Every traveler coming back from across the oceans tells us of hunger and physical need; but tells us also of the fear which grips men's hearts. The horror of a new war looms over them. The agony of hunger and exposure wracks their bodies. Helplessness, hopelessness, despair dog their steps by day and fill their dreams at night. Most of us in prosperous America manage to forget it as we go about our daily tasks and pleasures; yet the haunting fear is there. Hiroshima is not forgotten. In quiet moments we brood upon portents ominous of destruction.

Whence is help to come? Ignoring the tensions and terrors of the world will not help us. Steeling ourselves with stoic courage will help a little but gives us no transcending power. We need God and the certainty of His love. "God's in His heaven" men may say, and add "but that is just the trouble. All is *not* right with the world. He is there and we need Him here."

That we have Him here is the message of Christmas. He works unceasingly with never failing love to overcome the hates and fears and ignorance of men. In every tender word, in every act of good will, in every sacrifice for duty, in every mission of reconciliation, whether it be in some small labor trouble or on the world scope of the United Nations, God's love is active, moving, guiding. The manger at Bethlehem is the supreme witness that everywhere through the tortured world that love flows out unceasingly, assuring men that the two worlds are one world and that world is God's.

E. L. P.



# The Appalling Religiousness of America

ALEC VIDLER

AN invitation to one who is visiting the United States for the first time, and who has been here for only about two months, to give his impressions of religion in America is an invitation to him to make a fool of himself, though I acquit the editor of having that design upon me. I have been no further west than Chicago, and no further south than Washington, D. C. I know that there are vast areas not only of American territory but of American life and religion of which I have seen nothing, though I have been told much about them, enough to warn me that any generalization about this variegated and complex scene must be risky. Moreover, although as I have travelled about I have seen an immense amount in a short time, yet I have been located chiefly in colleges and seminaries and in church circles. It is true that I have learned a considerable amount about other aspects of American life, and have been present both at the World Series and at a banquet of industrialists! Still, my impressions are bound to be partial and superficial; I have myself come across many exceptions to what I am going to say and I can myself think of many ways in which my observations might be qualified. But while I am making a fool of myself, I may as well do so boldly. Nor will I occupy space in saying how uniformly charming and hospitable I have found Americans to be. Not the least engaging of your characteristics is your eagerness to hear yourselves candidly criticized.

## *Religion versus God*

The first thing that has struck me is that America is now much more religious than Britain. People here go to church much more, and I am told that church attendance has tended to increase since the end of the war. Your churches appear to be flourishing institutions, and they strike me, even if they do not strike you, as fabulously opulent. Our churches in Britain, on the other hand, are all more or less impoverished and tottering, and are on the verge of economic bankruptcy. At first sight the comparative prosperity of religion in America is calculated to hearten and gratify a visiting clergyman or to make him envious. But on second thoughts I find it curiously depressing.

It reminds me of the prodigious religiousness of Britain in the nineteenth century, the aftermath of which I can myself remember in the days of my childhood before 1914. That religiousness, all that business and efficiency in organizing religious services and activities, served, I am sure, as a cushion

against the hard impact of the living God. Our churches were like comfortable and well-managed religious clubs, in which we felt nicely at home, in which we felt good, in which we even wanted to be better, at least on Sunday evenings when singing particularly lush hymns. Although you do not go to church on Sunday evenings, your churches remind me of all that.

In Britain this religious efficiency and prosperity is being dissolved, where it has not already been dissolved, but out of the dissolution or in the midst of it the voice of the living God is beginning to be heard again, scaring and confounding us and making us feel most uncomfortable. As the cushion of religion, with which we were able to keep God at a respectable distance, collapses, we are beginning to turn to our Bibles in quite a fresh frame of mind, and its mighty words about the majesty and the wrath and the mercy of God, which in the old days of security we had got pleasantly muffled, are piercing us with their terror and their glory. Thus in Britain, while our churches are metaphorically if not literally falling into ruin, the disturbing and restoring presence of the living God is becoming an experienced reality amid the ruins. Here in the U.S.A., it seems to me, the cushion of religious efficiency and prosperity is still doing its comfortable, but fatal, work. I can only record this impression. It is not for me to say what those of you who are aware of this condition, as I know some of you are, can do about it. In the end, this is a matter wherein we have in agony to beseech God to show us what *He* is going to do about it.

## *Sect versus Church*

The second thing that has struck me is your sectarianism. Observe that I say 'your sectarianism,' not 'your sects' about which I knew plenty before I came here, more than I have been able to see since I came. Moreover, the old distinction between a church and a sect is now much confused everywhere. There are great churches which are riddled with sectarianism, and there are little sects which have the outlook and the accent of a great church. Nor do I wish to suggest that we are free from sectarianism in Britain. Far from it. But here it seems to be carried to its logical limit and to become fully explicit. And I will confess that it strikes me as a very horrid thing. The fact that you have so many churches and sects is, I realize, due in the first instance to the variety in the forms of Christianity which emigrants from Europe brought with them. I am not saying

that Americans are to be blamed either for this original circumstance or for its present-day consequences.

What surprises and shocks me is your apparent blindness to the flat contradiction between a collection or even a federation of sects and the fundamental idea of Christ's Church. I attribute this blindness to your familiarity with, and necessary acquiescence in, this babel of church-sects. Your churches, despite the splendid and universal professions which they may enshrine in their creeds or formularies, seem complacently to regard it as their task to cater for the religious needs of such individuals or such sections of the population as will patronize them. I see no body (certainly not the large but Rome-dominated and exclusive popish sect) standing forth and bearing witness that the work of Christ in every land is to bind men together in one universal family or kingdom without regard to their different racial origins, trades and professions, income brackets, class interests, political parties, etc.

I find that the word 'parish' is used here to denote not a territorial area and all the people in it but a gathered congregation; and this usage is significant. The true idea of a parish church is that it claims all the people dwelling in a particular urban or rural area as citizens of the kingdom of Christ, just as a National Church<sup>1</sup> makes the same claim upon all the members of a nation, whether or not they themselves confess Christ as their King.

In England and Scotland we still have parishes and National Churches in this sense, although the Church of England and the Church of Scotland differ in their forms of government and in their relation to the State, although neither has the active allegiance of more than a minority of the population, and although both are accompanied by dissenting sects which they rightly acknowledge to be churches as well as sects. Dreadfully as our Christian and ecclesiastical condition has deteriorated, witness is still borne in our land to the great idea of an inclusive National Church, and the day is perhaps much nearer than any of us realize when the sectarianism which has infected our churches as well as our sects will be transcended in a united Church which will be able to embrace within one body all confessing Christians.

What surprises and shocks me here is not that the

<sup>1</sup>By a National Church I do not mean a State Church or an Established Church. I do not mean the old pre-tolerance type of National Church which was involved in the attempts of civil governments to enforce religious uniformity upon their subjects. I mean a Church which realizes its responsibility to God for the whole people in which it is set, in particular its responsibility for binding them into unity on the ground of their membership in Christ's universal body.

U.S.A. recognizes no National Church, for I can perfectly well see that this is not a present possibility, but that the principle of a National Church in all its bearings seems never to have occurred to American Christians as a fundamental criterion which illuminates your ecclesiastical diseases. You seem to have no higher notion of church union than a federation of sects. I shall be happy to learn that I am mistaken about this.

### *Law versus Gospel*

But what shocks me most of all is the character of the preaching that seems to prevail in your churches, though here at least I know that there are notable exceptions. So far as I can ascertain, the paradigm of American preaching is: "Let me suggest that you try to be good." Moralistic homilies are still the order of the day. They are delivered no doubt with various degrees of eloquence, and they may recommend various degrees and forms of virtue or of piety. There may even be such preachers with fire in their bellies, though I have not come across them.

Preachers take texts from Scripture (though they do not always do that much), and treat them as mottoes or captions under which they excogitate some religious or moral lessons that have little, if any, direct relation to the Scripture they have quoted. Who preaches sermons that are genuine expositions of the text and sense of Scripture, bringing to bear the great Biblical themes of God's judgment and mercy upon men who are dead in their complacency, self-confidence or pride? Your preachers, it seems to me, are still advocating justification by good works of one kind or another (may be very orthodox or very 'Catholic' good works); they are not proclaiming the Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. They are not exposing the basic human predicament, namely that the attempt to justify ourselves by good works inflates our pride so that our progress in health turns into a worse disease. This predicament being unrealized, there is blindness to the starting-point of the Gospel of the New Covenant. You are still preaching the Law, and a pretty easy-going or romantic Law at that.

These are, I hope you will believe, the faithful wounds of a friend, who speaks not out of strength but out of weakness, and who also has Pelagianism in his blood but who by the mercy of God has been brought to see it for what it is.

### **Author in This Issue**

*Ursula M. (Mrs. Reinhold) Niebuhr is head of the Department of Religion at Barnard College, New York City.*

**Editorial Note:** The preceding article by Dr. Alec Vidler, editor of "Theology" and Librarian of St. Deiniol's Library at Harwarden, England, was written at our request. Dr. Vidler is at present on a visit in this country and we were certain that his critical view of our religious life would be of great value to American Christians. We feel compelled to take issue with him on his criticism of our religious pluralism, all the more so because we are afraid that what will seem an unjustified indictment on this point may detract from the power of his general (and it seems to us justified) criticism of the "religiousness" of American churches.

The religious pluralism of America has its own special history, being partly the consequence transplanting European "national" churches to a new nation into which they carry their old national ethos and partly the result of the protest of the sectarian and exclusive religious community against "national" and inclusive churches. Dr. Vidler seems to recognize no validity in this radical protest against churches which are too closely identified with the ethos of a nation. He seems to regard a "national" church as having some kind of special Scriptural warrant. Whatever the weaknesses of the "sectarian" church, which has set the pattern for American church life, one should think the prevailing secularism of modern culture, might give the idea of an exclusive church a new validity. Is there any value in a "national" church pretending to be the whole nation at prayer, when it is, as a matter of fact a minority group within the nation, not only in a culture which is, like our own, officially secular but also in European nations which are officially Christian, but not actually so?

It would be wrong to be complacent about the anarchy of American religious pluralism. We are only slowly overcoming it, but perhaps not more slowly than European established churches are able to include dissenting churches into their fellowship. Dr. Vidler does not want to accept any present "established" church as the truly national church. But the higher degree of religious unity in European nations depends altogether upon the supremacy of such established churches; and their inability to find a common ground with dissenting bodies is derived precisely from the pretension that they are in some ultimate sense "the" national church.

One further question must be asked: If we are to insist with such emphasis as Dr. Vidler on "national" churches, what is to become of "Christ's Church"? Is not the national ethos which colors the church life of each nation a peril to the ecumenical movement, and do not all national churches assume that the contingent historical forces, which molded their history, have a universal validity?

R. N.

## **Denmark: German Pastors Meet Danish Church Leaders**

Recently a theological conference lasting 30 days, met in Hillerød, Denmark, to which the Danish Ecumenical Council had invited 35 pastors from the Evangelical Churches of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary and Poland.

The German participants expressed their gratitude to the Danish Church for arranging this conference "at a time when there are so many obstacles to real friendship and peaceful cooperation between our two nations." Their declaration continues: "As participants in this conference we were especially grateful that we had sufficient time to get to know one another and to discuss things together. This gave us the opportunity to talk over the obstacles to understanding between our countries in complete openness and sincerity, without concealing or glossing over anything."

The German participants confessed the guilt of their country in bringing war, violence, oppression and injustice to other nations. The other participants confessed that they were also responsible for the moral attitude of their own countrymen, and were, therefore, also guilty; that owing to the war they had allowed evil to overcome them, and had rendered evil for evil.

The leader of the German delegation added that the German participants "had looked forward with great anxiety to the meeting in Hillerød, especially to meeting Czechs, Danes and Poles. The barriers between these nations and Germany has by no means been removed, because we meet as disciples of our common Lord. This discipleship makes it possible for us to meet, but it does not wipe out *facts* such as Lidice and Warsaw, innumerable hostages who were put to death, the murder of six million Polish Jews, the imprisonments and deaths in the concentration camps, and the destruction of the peace, well-being and happiness of innumerable people. We Germans found it very moving that none of the brethren from Churches in these countries met us in a spirit of hostility, hatred or of refusal to be reconciled, although many of them had either spent years themselves in concentration camps, or had suffered through persecution and the destruction of their homeland. They had not forgotten—how should they forget—the experiences that they themselves and their country had passed through; but they had overcome those experiences; they had overcome them, because they did not use our wickedness to justify the evil among their own people . . . It was not human vengeance nor human attempts to conceal things which separated us or brought us together; but the reality of our fellowship in Christ, in which guilt was confessed and forgiven, because this fellowship derived its life solely from the grace of our Lord. This sense of fellowship was the foundation of our life together, our talks and our prayers, during those weeks. . . . Avoiding any kind of false 'Christian' program and any human optimism, we tried to express what was the basis of our fellowship, the only thing which justifies our hope that our nations may be able to live together once again in confidence and peace."

E.P.S., Geneva.



# The World Church: News and Notes

## Italy: Pentecostal Worship Meetings Banned in Pompei

An official decree has been issued by the prefect of the Naples province forbidding members of the Italian Pentecostal sect from holding worship meetings in the historically-famous town of Pompei, at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius. The decree asserted that the Pentecostal gatherings are offensive to the predominantly Roman Catholic population and tend to create public disorder.

"Pentecostal gatherings are held in the proximity of a sanctuary which is continuously visited by throngs of (Catholic) faithful in pilgrimage," the decree stated, "and are badly tolerated by the general population. This may cause serious incidents and upset public order. Therefore the Pentecostal sect is to be dissolved, their oratory must be closed, and no more religious meetings and manifestations are to be permitted."

The Naples decree marks the climax of a long series of restrictions imposed upon the Pentecostal sect in various parts of central and southern Italy, especially in Sicily, where the sect is strongest.

The first restrictions on the Pentecostals were imposed in 1935 when the fascist regime prohibited meetings of the sect on the ground that their religious manifestations were against social order and detrimental to "the physical and psychic integrity of worshipers."

The fascist decree was theoretically abrogated after Italy's liberation, together with all fascist laws restricting freedom of worship for religious minorities. During the Allied occupation, Italian Pentecostals freely gathered and were joined by many Allied soldiers in common worship.

Following the withdrawal of Allied troops, however, restrictions on the Pentecostal movement were renewed. In a circular letter dated August 6 last, the government informed all provincial prefects that the decree of 1935 was still to be considered valid, and for the same reasons given in the decree. (RNS)

## Switzerland: Community in Work

Recently the Swiss Study and Information Center sent a series of theses to the Swiss Government on the subject: "Community in Work." These theses were unanimously adopted by a national congress held at Macolin. Monseigneur Charrière, Bishop of Geneva, Fribourg and Lausanne, and Professor Emil Brunner of Zurich, placed the problem in its moral setting, "the only one which gives any possibility of terminating the divorce between the individual and the community."

"The first point to be faced," state the theses, "is that of the real meaning of human life. Two essential values must be fully restored: the freedom of human personality; and the harmonious human community."

"A contradiction is revealed if we compare the political rights of the citizen, and the rights of the worker in the system of economic production. In the political sphere the wage-earner enjoys equal rights with his

fellow-citizens; but he is subordinate to them in the sphere of work. This contradiction is dangerous for the future of democracy where human personalities—whether their contribution to society is in the form of capital or of labor—must all receive equal moral rights, because they are all human personalities . . .

"The situation is too often represented as a choice between capitalist liberalism on the one hand and totalitarian collectivism on the other; but this picture is inadequate. The solution . . . must find some way of harmonizing the three essential values: freedom of the human personality, organization of community life, and federalism."

How are these principles to be applied? "We must set up a new statute of labor, for the purpose of (a) translating into action the recognition of the principle that labor is not a commodity, and that economic, professional and business life are all equally essential forms of work in which human personalities have equal moral rights, whether their contribution to society is in the form of capital or of labor; (b) enabling all grades of workers to cooperate to an increasing extent in the management of national economic, professional and business life; (c) replacing salaried work (which is already an advanced form) by 'work-partnership' . . ."

(E.P.S. Geneva)

## Unitas and the World Council of Churches

In the quarterly magazine "Unitas" (September, 1947), organ of the (Roman Catholic) Unitas Association, the President of the Association, the Rev. Charles Boyer, S.J., analyzes a recent article by Dr. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, on the nature of the World Council.

With regard to the "dualism" of the World Council, Father Boyer says: "On the one hand these churches can only meet together by excluding any interference from any authority on the matter of doctrine, and by respecting the most sharp contrasts which exist between the groups concerned. On the other hand they would like to advance in the direction of unity and even to regard themselves as a real embodiment of unity—fugitive perhaps, but nevertheless genuine. But in religious matters, where there is no unity of faith, what unity can be maintained? And in the case of Stockholm and Lausanne, when the question of Christian unity comes up, how can we believe that this unity is a fact when there is scarcely any agreement about anything, and the great Church of Rome is absent and—it must be admitted—in disagreement? The hope which remains is that nevertheless these non-Catholic Christians are haunted by the ideal of real unity. They talk about the *Una Sancta*, about the one Body of the one Church of Christ, about the unity of the Early Church described in the New Testament. They call this unity invisible, but perhaps one day they will see that it must be visible; they see the *Una Sancta* as something in the future, but perhaps they will come to recognize that this *Una Sancta* did once exist in the past, that it exists today,

# Christianity and Crisis

*A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion*  
537 West 121st St., New York 27, N. Y.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

REINHOLD NIEBUHR, *Chairman*

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| JAMES C. BAKER                                      | JOHN A. MACKAY     |
| JOHN C. BENNETT                                     | RHODA E. MCCULLOCH |
| CHARLES W. GILKEY                                   | FRANCIS P. MILLER  |
| F. ERNEST JOHNSON                                   | EDWARD L. PARSONS  |
| UMPHREY LEE   | HOWARD C. ROBBINS  |
| HENRY SMITH LEIPER                                  | HENRY P. VAN DUSEN |
| GLOSTER MORRIS, <i>Secretary of Editorial Board</i> |                    |

that by accepting painful divisions, it has not abjured its faith, but has rather affirmed and consolidated it, and that it keeps all its doors wide open to await the return of those who left it during a troubled period of history."

On the question of the "authority" of the World Council which, according to Archbishop Temple's phrase "will consist in the weight which it carries with the Churches by its own wisdom," Father Boyer remarks:

"One might believe that through inspiration and prophetic insight unity might be achieved, at least partially. If the World Council of Churches is inspired to launch an appeal or proclaim a principle, are not all the churches going to follow it? Dr. Visser 't Hooft does not desire this, nor could he really desire it. It would mean restoring the principle of authority. It would mean attributing to an organ—which was recognized as inspired—the privilege which Roman Catholics recognize in the Pope and the Councils, whom they know are assisted by the Holy Spirit. Whatever may be the message of the World Council of Churches, it remains open to free criticism from the different denominations, even to the criticism of many individual Christians. It is for each individual to decide whether the Council has really been inspired, whether it is the expression of the one Body of Christ, whether real unity has come about for a moment. . . . Consequently is it

not probable that each group, and each individual, will regard the decisions of the World Council in the light of his own beliefs, accepting what is in conformity with them and rejecting the rest? Again, unity will only be reached on very general points, which will not even be specifically Christian. It really would not have been worthwhile for the Word of God to descend to earth, if it were only to announce points like these."

E. P. S., Geneva.

## Italy: Pope Restores Coptic Patriarchate

The Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria, Egypt, which was suspended in 1904 during the pontificate of Pope Pius X, has been restored by Pope Pius XII, according to an announcement by the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church. The patriarchate exercises jurisdiction over 63,000 Catholics of the Coptic Rite, who have their own canon law but whose bishops are nominated by the Pope.

The new Patriarch is Bishop Marco Khouzam, who has served as Apostolic Administrator of the Thebes eparchy, or diocese, since 1926.

Vatican circles hailed the appointment of the new Coptic Patriarch as "extremely interesting." The Pope's action is regarded as indicating the increasing importance of the Catholic Copts in Egypt's political and economic life, and as demonstrating the Pontiff's lively interest in Egypt and other Arab states. (RNS)

## Egypt: Chaplains Report Suicides Increasing Among Middle East POWs

Cases of suicide and insanity are increasing steadily among more than 60,000 German prisoners of war who have been detained in the Middle East for periods ranging from two and one-half years to five years, according to a declaration issued by Protestant POW-chaplains in Egypt and addressed to the British Government and to "the Christian people of all the world."

Appealing for the prompt repatriation of the prisoners, the chaplains asserted that "the mental strain of these POWs has reached a degree which gives apprehension of the most serious consequences for the future time."

This situation has been caused, the chaplains stated, "by the long time of their captivity, the separation from their families, the bad news from home, the impossibility to give their folks in Germany efficient help, and the indefinite time of their captivity."

"We earnestly fear," the declaration concluded, "that our fellow prisoners in the Middle East will lose the last and best we want to show them in the spirit of Christ—the faith and confidence in the fact that in this world of ours not brutal force, not the spirit of revenge, and not the law of the mightier are decisive and predominant, but that cooperation within the different peoples and between them is possible, if it is done in the spirit of justice, humanity, reconciliation and good-will."

The declaration was signed in behalf of the POW-Protestant chaplains in Egypt by Pfarrer Norbert Ruckert, dean of chaplains in the area. (RNS)

Periodical Division  
Detroit Public Library  
5201 Woodward Ave.  
Detroit 2, Mich.

650 1-49